

# Germanization, Polonization and Russification in the Partitioned Lands of Poland-Lithuania: Myths and Reality<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Two main myths constitute the founding basis of popular Polish ethnic nationalism. First, that Poland-Lithuania was an early Poland, and second, that the partitioning powers at all times unwaveringly pursued policies of Germanization and Russification. In the former case, the myth appropriates a common past today shared by Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine. In the latter case, Polonization is written out of the picture entirely, as also are variations and changes in the policies of Germanization and Russification. Taken together, the two myths to a large degree obscure (and even falsify) the past, making comprehension of it difficult, if not impossible. This article seeks to disentangle the knots of anachronisms that underlie the Polish national master narrative, in order to present a clearer picture of the interplay between the policies of Germanization, Polonization and Russification as they unfolded in the lands of the partitioned Poland-Lithuania during the long 19th century.

**Key words:** Germanization, nationalism, partitioned lands of Poland-Lithuania, Poland-Lithuania, Polonization, Russification

## Introduction

Between 2007 and 2010, I taught Irish students who, in the framework of their European studies track, specialized in Polish language and culture in Trinity College, Dublin. In the third year of their studies they went to Poland to attend Polish-language courses at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. On their return to Ireland for the final year of their studies, I lectured to them on the partitioned lands of the Commonwealth of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the long 19th century. I soon realised that, after their year in Poland, the main piece of information they learned about this

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period of Polish-Lithuanian history was the incessant Germanization and Russification of the Polish nation by the partitioning powers. With these policies the partitioning powers were purported to have aimed at 'denationalizing' (*wynarodowienie*) Poles by making them into Germans and Russians, respectively. (cf Klemensiewicz 1999: 507-508). Such nuances as the fact that Poland-Lithuania was a multiethnic, multiconfessional and multilingual country, or that the Polish nation as we know it is a product of the second half of the 19th century were blatantly missing from the picture of the past that my students brought back from Poland. Perhaps I should not have been too surprised, because a similar version of Polish history was imparted to my daughter in her middle and secondary school during the mid 2000s.

The realization of how much is omitted from the story to make the pre-selected facts conform to the requirements of the preferred master narrative of Polish national history moved me to cover in my lectures some other ethnolinguistic groups which stem from (or are strongly connected to) Poland-Lithuania, besides Poles. These are Belarusians, (Ashkenazi) Jews, Latvians, Lithuanians and Ukrainians. The Polish national master narrative blots them out of the picture, crudely equating Poland-Lithuania with today's Polish nation-state, although the student can easily see on the map that the former polity's territory overlaps not only with Poland, but also with Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine, while it skirts the territories of today's Estonia and Latvia, as well.

This ideologically influenced insistence on the essential Polishness of Poland-Lithuania in the modern, ethnolinguistic meaning of this term not only obfuscates the understanding of the past. It amounts to an emotional, and largely illogical, refusal to accept the objective reality that a single common past can diverge into several separate 'presents', both national and in terms of sovereign states. This is precisely what happened during the period of modernization, which commenced after Poland-Lithuania had disappeared, and was largely completed before modern Poland emerged as a nation-state in 1918. At that very time the nation-states of Latvia and Lithuania were also established, and their Belarusian and Ukrainian counterparts briefly appeared before their statehood was extinguished by the Soviet Union.

As I did in my lectures in Trinity College, I intend this article to be a modest contribution to the correction to the portrayal of the 19th-century history of the lands of the partitioned Poland-Lithuania; a correction to the Polonecentric suppression of the stories of those

whose descendants decided to become not Poles, but Belarusians, Jews, Latvians, Lithuanians, or Ukrainians.<sup>2</sup> In my effort I follow, amongst others, the example of Wojciech Zajączkowski (2009), who wrote his history of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, giving their due to the ethnically non-Russian population of the country, who at times constituted as many as half of its inhabitants. (Zajączkowski 2009: 3-4) The same was true of Poland-Lithuania, where between 1569 and 1771, ethnic Poles did not at any time amount to more than 50 per cent of the polity's populace. (Kuklo 2009: 222)

## Whose Commonwealth?

Undoubtedly, policies of Germanization and Russification were pursued in the partition zones of the former Poland-Lithuania, but not always and everywhere, as assumed in the popular Polish national master narrative. Furthermore, this master narrative generally gives little space to the instances of Polonization that took place in some of the partition zones for considerable periods of time.

In order to present the dynamic unfolding of these three competing nationally transformative processes, the stage on which they took place must be set. First, the country that was progressively partitioned out of existence in 1772, 1793 and 1795 was not a Poland but a dual Commonwealth (*Rech Paspalitaia* in Belarusian, *Rech' Pospolitaia* in Russian, *Rich Pospolyta* in Ukrainian, *Rzeczpospolita* in Polish, *Žečpospolita* in Lithuanian, or *Žečpospolīta* in Latvian<sup>3</sup>), consisting of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This had been called into existence by the 1569 Union of Lublin,<sup>4</sup> contracted by the two component polities. Polish historians have a tendency to

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<sup>2</sup> For the sake of brevity, in this enumeration I do not mention smaller ethnic groups that are not recognized as nations in their own right and that failed to gain their own nation-states. Among others, they include Cossacks, Goraliens, Kashubs, Latgallians, Livonians, Mazurs, Samogitians, Poleshuks and Ruthenians (Hutsuls, Lemkos).

<sup>3</sup> All the terms stem from the phonetic rendering of the Polish one of *Rzeczpospolita*. (Obviously, most were not in use during the existence of Poland-Lithuania, because the languages did not exist in their standard or official forms then, with the exception of Polish and Russian.) In turn the official Polish name of Poland-Lithuania is a literal translation of the Latin word *respublica*, for 'republic' (literally 'public thing'), that is why *Rzeczpospolita* is most commonly translated as 'Commonwealth' into English. Today, the term 'republic' is rendered in the Latinate manner as *republika* in Polish, while the antiquated usage of *rzeczpospolita* survives only in modern-day Poland's official name, *Rzeczpospolita Polska*, translated as 'Republic of Poland' into English.

<sup>4</sup> The Polish text of the Union of Lublin can be accessed at: [http://www.interklasa.pl/portal/index/strony?mainSP=subjectpages&mainSRV=historia&methid=23587919&page=article&article\\_id=318542](http://www.interklasa.pl/portal/index/strony?mainSP=subjectpages&mainSRV=historia&methid=23587919&page=article&article_id=318542), Aug 10, 2010.

subsume the Grand Duchy of Lithuania into the general term 'Poland,' thus implying that the grand duchy was the junior partner in the union. (cf Wydra and Rzepka 2004: 180) On the other hand, their Lithuanian counterparts emphasize the fact that the grand duchy survived, alongside the Kingdom of Poland, as a constituent part of the dual Poland-Lithuania until the commonwealth's very end. (Rachuba et al 2009: 285-292)

Only the central and eastern two-thirds of today's Poland overlap with the western half of the Commonwealth's Kingdom of Poland. The remaining (western) third of contemporary Poland, ceded by Germany after 1945, had belonged at the time of the partitions of Poland-Lithuania to Prussia and the Holy Roman Empire. At present, the eastern half of the territory of the Commonwealth's Kingdom of Poland and Grand Duchy of Lithuania is split among Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine, with some territories included in Estonia, Latvia<sup>5</sup> and the Russian Federation. The distinction between Poland-Lithuania and modern Poland can be also presented in general demographic terms. The former country's inhabitants numbered 12.3 million in 1771. (Kuklo 2009: 211). At present, Poland's population is 38 million, which, together with the inhabitants of Belarus (9.6 million), Latvia (2.3 million), Lithuania (3.4 million), Ukraine (46 million), and Russia's Kaliningrad Oblast (1 million), add up to more than 100 million. Between 1771 and 2010, the population on the territory of the former Poland-Lithuania grew nine-fold, but the proportion of ethnic Poles in it decreased to 38 per cent, or roughly speaking, one-third of the total. Perhaps Israel should be cautiously added to this tally, because at 3 million, the Ashkenazi Jews, mostly originating in the lands of the former Poland-Lithuania,<sup>6</sup> account for more than half of Israel's Jewish population. (Israeli 2010) And the latter polity is an embodiment of the Central European model of an ethnolinguistic nation-state that, due to the exigencies of history, just happens to be located in the Middle East. (Judt 2003)

Another myth that calls for clarification is that the powers that partitioned Poland-Lithuania among themselves were Prussia, Russia

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<sup>5</sup> In 1622 Poland-Lithuania lost Livonia (today, western Latvia and southern Estonia) to Sweden.

<sup>6</sup> They arrived to Israel in several distinctive ways. Firstly, between the two world wars, from Europe to the British mandate of Palestine. Secondly, as Holocaust survivors from Europe after World War Two. Thirdly, as expellees from the Soviet bloc countries in the 1950s and 1960s. Fourthly, as settlers from Western Europe and Northern America. And lastly, from Russia and other post-Soviet countries after the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union.

and Austria. Indeed, the Kingdom of Prussia and the Russian Empire were two of these powers, but 'Austria' is a very inexact label for the third one. Between 1740 and 1780, Maria Theresa directly ruled the hereditary lands of the Habsburgs included in the Holy Roman Empire (as Queen of Bohemia and Archduchess of Austria) and outside it (as Queen of Hungary). The lands gained by her in the first partition of Poland-Lithuania (1772) became part of the Habsburg hereditary lands, and remained outside the empire. Her husband, Francis I, reigned as Holy Roman Emperor from 1745 to 1765. Then the title passed to their eldest son, Joseph II. After his mother's death in 1780, he also inherited direct rule over the Habsburg lands, as Archduke of Austria, King of Bohemia and King of Hungary. On his demise in 1790, his brother, Leopold II, succeeded him in the same capacity. The reign was cut short by Leopold II's death two years later, which opened the way to the multiple thrones to his son, Francis II in 1792. It was he who oversaw the participation of the Habsburgs in the third partition of Poland-Lithuania (1795). (They had opted out from the second partition in 1793.)

Furthermore, it is incorrect, as the tendency is, to speak of the partitions as the 'partitions of Poland'.<sup>7</sup> The country that was partitioned out of existence by the Habsburgs, Prussia and Russia was the Commonwealth of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The fact is commonly glided over in Polish historiography; international historians writing in English, French and German usually follow this Polish national usage, unlike their less heard colleagues from Belarus, Lithuania, Russia or Ukraine, who invariably write of the 'partitions of the Commonwealth [of Poland-Lithuania]'.<sup>8</sup> Although the Constitution of May 3, 1791 (formally the 'Government Act'<sup>9</sup>) foresaw

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<sup>7</sup> Cf [http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rozbiory\\_Polski](http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rozbiory_Polski), Aug 11, 2010; [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teilungen\\_Polens](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teilungen_Polens), Aug 11, 2010; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partitions\\_of\\_Poland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partitions_of_Poland), Aug 11, 2010; or [http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partitions\\_de\\_la\\_Pologne](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partitions_de_la_Pologne), Aug 11, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Cf [http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A0%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%BB%D1%8B\\_%D0%A0%D0%B5%D1%87%D0%B8\\_%D0%9F%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%B9](http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A0%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%BB%D1%8B_%D0%A0%D0%B5%D1%87%D0%B8_%D0%9F%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%B9), Aug 11, 2010; [http://lt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abiej%C5%B3\\_Taut%C5%B3\\_Respublikos\\_padalijimai](http://lt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abiej%C5%B3_Taut%C5%B3_Respublikos_padalijimai), Aug 11, 2010; [http://be-x-old.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9F%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%B7%D0%B5%D0%BB%D1%8B\\_%D0%A0%D1%8D%D1%87%D1%8B\\_%D0%9F%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%BB%D1%96%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%B9](http://be-x-old.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9F%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%B7%D0%B5%D0%BB%D1%8B_%D0%A0%D1%8D%D1%87%D1%8B_%D0%9F%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%BB%D1%96%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%B9), Aug 11, 2010; or [http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9F%D0%BE%D0%B4%D1%96%D0%BB%D0%B8\\_%D0%A0%D0%B5%D1%87%D1%96\\_%D0%9F%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%97](http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9F%D0%BE%D0%B4%D1%96%D0%BB%D0%B8_%D0%A0%D0%B5%D1%87%D1%96_%D0%9F%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%97), Aug 11, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> In Polish, *Ustawa Rządowa*.

reforms that in a longer run could have transformed Poland-Lithuania into a more unitary and absolutist Poland, the partitions prevented this possibility. What is more, the nobility of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania stood fast by the separateness of their polity, and Russia employed the political tradition of the grand duchy to legitimize St Petersburg's rule in its own partition zone. (Sahanovič and Šybieka 2006: 93; Szybieka 2002: 24)

## Languages

Initially, Latin was the sole official language of the Kingdom of Poland, employed for administration, official records and literary purposes. Latin became the sociolect of the male half of the nobility and of the Catholic clergy, who constituted the kingdom's 'natio', the narrow estate elite that was eligible to participate in the monarchy's politics. In the first half of the 16th century, the printing of Polish-language books took off, and the language began to be employed in administrative and political deliberations that led to the granting of co-official status to it in 1543. (Wydra and Rzepka 2004: 180) While Polish allowed the nobility to emphasize its difference vis-à-vis nobles from other states, Latin, spread by the well-developed and growing Jesuit educational system, let them simultaneously maintain a commonality with nobilities in other Catholic and (to a lesser extent) Protestant polities across Europe, and especially in Central Europe. (Mikołajczak 1999: 187)

The first official written language of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was Ruthenian (*ruski*), which was acquired in the course of the 14th- and 15th-century expansion of this duchy at the expense of the Rus' principalities. It was the language of the Slavophone inhabitants of the conquered lands. (Magocsi 2002: 21) The Ruthenian and Polish name of the Ruthenian language, *ruski*, is derived from the name of Rus' (or *Ruś* in Polish). The English name 'Ruthenian' is derived from Latin *Ruthenia* for Rus'.<sup>10</sup> The language employed the old Cyrillic script, as used for writing the Orthodox liturgical language of (Old) Church Slavonic. It is very different from the contemporary Cyrillic, *Grazhdanka* (Russian for 'civil' that is, non-ecclesiastical, script). *Grazhdanka* was modeled on the *Antiqua* type of the Latin alphabet. *Antiqua* is commonly employed today for writing and publishing in the

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<sup>10</sup> In Muscovy Ruthenian was dubbed *Litovskij*, or 'Lithuanian,' which by no means meant the present-day non-Slavic language of Lithuanian, Lithuania's official language. (Ališauskas et al 2006: 645)

Latin script-based languages, and earlier had to compete with this alphabet's Gothic type (Black Letter, Fraktur) that was in widespread use for writing and printing in German and other vernaculars employed in Protestant states or by Protestant populaces<sup>11</sup> through the 19th century, and less so until the middle of the following century. Graždanka was commissioned in Amsterdam by Peter the Great in 1699, and after some years of trial and testing, in 1708 it became the official script for non-ecclesiastical books in Muscovy (which became the Russian Empire in 1721). (Kapr 1993: 78-82; Shitsgal 1947: 24-25)

The grand duchy's Ruthenian language, unlike Muscovy's official Church Slavonic, was more attuned to the local Slavic vernaculars, as employed in the grand ducal chanceries at Wilno (Vilnius) and Kijów (Kyiv).<sup>12</sup> Today, anachronistically, the former, northern, variety of Ruthenian is identified as 'Old Belarusian' and the latter, southern, variety as 'Old Ukrainian.' The 1569 Union of Lublin, besides transforming the personal union between the kingdom and the grand duchy into a real union of states, also granted the southern half of the grand duchy to the kingdom. As a result, the kingdom's official languages of Latin and Polish gradually replaced Ruthenian there. (Obviously, Orthodox and, though to a lesser extent, Greek Catholic clergy and literate nobles and burghers continued to use Ruthenian and Old Cyrillic.) (Martel 1938; Shevelov 1980; Stang 1932) The union also conferred the same privileges as enjoyed by the nobility in the kingdom on the grand duchy's boyars, thus transforming the latter into a nobility (*natio*) of the grand duchy.

This paved the way for the gradual replacement of Ruthenian by Latin and Polish in the grand duchy, which was completed with the introduction of the formal ban on the use of Ruthenian in 1697, when it was replaced by Polish. In this manner, a situation arose that appears paradoxical from today's vantage, where Latin and Polish were official in the kingdom, while only Polish was an official language in the ethnically non-Polish grand duchy. Obviously, the implementation of official decisions was more spotty in pre-modern times than today, and in the grand duchy Latin retained its elevated role in public and as the main medium of education. Likewise, besides mastering Latin as their new sociolect, the grand duchy's nobility also embraced Polish as the

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<sup>11</sup> Danish, Estonian, Finnish, Latvian, Norwegian, Prussian Lithuanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Sorbian, or Swedish.

<sup>12</sup> In order to avoid anachronism, I use place-names in linguistic forms that were official at the time to which a given passage refers, and provide modern-day forms in parentheses.

preferred language of everyday communication. But it should not be forgotten that because Ruthenian and Polish were both Slavic languages, there was a considerable degree of mutual comprehensibility between them. And, inevitably, local Slavic dialects strongly influenced both languages as spoken and written by nobles. In some instances the linguistic shift from Ruthenian to Polish actually amounted to a mere change in the script they employed for writing down their local dialect; they replaced Church Cyrillic with Latin characters for this purpose. (Mikołajczak 1999: 222; Sahanovič and Šybieka 2006: 84)

In addition, German functioned as the leading official language in some regions of the Commonwealth of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This was the case in the kingdom's province of Royal Prussia, in the kingdom's fief of Ducal Prussia, and in the kingdom and the grand duchy's joint fiefs of Courland and Livonia. But this official German language is quite distant from today's standard German, as its dialectal base was Low (Northern) German, actually more similar to Dutch than to standard German, (the latter based on the Saxonian dialect of Meißen). Low German was the official language of the commercial-cum-political Hanseatic League that dominated trade and politics in the Baltic and the North Sea between the 13th and 16th centuries, before it lost its significance in the mid-17th century. The decline of the League also entailed the loss of prestige by Low German, relegated then to the status of the most reviled of the German dialects. (König 2005: 92; Nabert 2005: map)

The official use of languages for administrative and public purposes was even more diverse at the local level. Numerous municipal governments employed German for official purposes, or various German languages based on various dialects, which a given group of settlers from the Holy Roman Empire had brought to one or other locality in Poland-Lithuania. (König 2005: 92, Krallert 1958: 6-7, 10-11) Armenians and Jews in Poland enjoyed their non-territorial systems of communal self-government grounded in the two groups' ethnic and religious specificities. Jews employed Biblical Hebrew written in the Hebrew writing system, and to a lesser degree Aramaic, also noted in this script. On the other hand, Armenians wrote in Grabar (or the Old Armenian of the 5th-century Armenian translation of the Bible) noted in the Armenian alphabet. But in everyday life both Armenians and Jews spoke (and sometime wrote) in different languages of intracommunal communication. In the case of the former it was Kipchak (a Turkic language from which modern-day Bashkir, Karaim, Kazak, Karakalpak or Tatar stem [Johanson and Csató 1998]).



And in the latter case, they used Yiddish, a Germanic dialect close to the dialectal base of standard German, but distinguished as a separate language by the infusion of Hebrew, Aramaic and Slavic linguistic loans. The use of Hebrew characters for writing and printing Yiddish made it markedly different from German. Similarly, Armenians wrote and printed in Kipchak with the use of their Armenian script, and not the Arabic characters that were then widely employed for writing many Turkic languages. (Galustian 1980; Geller 1994; Sienkiewicz 2010: 59-102)

A similar tactic was adopted by Muslim Tatars, who, on the invitation of the grand duke in the 14th century, left their native Crimea (then influenced by the southward expansion of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania) and settled mainly in the areas of today's Lithuanian town of Trakai and the northwestern Ukrainian town of Luts'k. They served as soldiers in the grand duchy's army, and were granted the rank of boyars (nobles). Because it was an exclusively male military emigration, they lost their language swiftly by marrying local Slavophone women. Despite this, besides using the Arabic language for religious purposes, they wrote their documents either in Ruthenian or Polish (or, basically, in local Slavic dialects) in Arabic letters. (Danylenko 2006)

As mentioned above, the grand duchy's main official language of Ruthenian developed from the (Old) Church Slavonic language (so named only in the early 19th century), known to its users simply as 'Slavic.' As in the case of Latin for Catholics, Hebrew for Jews, Grabar for Armenians, or Arabic for Muslims, Church Slavonic functioned as the liturgical language of Slavophone Orthodox Christians.<sup>13</sup> Later, when a segment of Poland-Lithuania's Orthodox population was made to switch their ecclesiastical allegiance to the pope, thus giving rise to a Uniate (Greek Catholic) Church, they preserved Church Slavonic as their liturgical language. Likewise, they stuck to Cyrillic when it came to writing in their vernaculars. (Magocsi 2002: 53)

A year after the first partition of Poland-Lithuania (1772), the pope dissolved the Society of Jesus. In Poland-Lithuania, the Jesuit

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<sup>13</sup> The Romancephone population (Walachians, who became today's Romanians and Moldovans) of Hungary's Transylvania and the Danubian principalities of Walachia and Moldavia employed Church Slavonic for religious and official purposes until the turn of the 18th century. Furthermore, Church Cyrillic was preserved for writing Romanian until the mid-19th century. Interestingly, Moldovan was written and printed in modern Cyrillic (Grazhdanka) until 1989, and this situation continues to the present day in the unrecognised polity of Transnistria.

educational system was entrusted to the Commission of National Education, considered to be the world's first ministry of education. The commission replaced Latin with Polish as the leading language of instruction. (Tapper and Palfreyman 2004: 140)

It sealed the fate of Latin as the sociolect of the politics and culture of the nobility in Poland-Lithuania. However, this language reform could not be applied in the lands that had been shorn from the country in the first partition. That is why Latin persisted as the preferred language of education, culture and politics in such far-flung cities of the Commonwealth as Polotsk (today, Polatsk in Belarus), Lemberg (today, Lviv in Ukraine), or Culm (today, Chełmno in Poland).<sup>14</sup> Latin remained the universal language of the Roman Catholic liturgy until the early 1970s, but at the turn of the 19th century it was replaced by French as the main sociolect of the nobility in Poland-Lithuania and across Central Europe. The Polish-Lithuanian nobility actually shunned Polish as a 'peasant vernacular.' Therefore the nobles, although constituting the only considerable group literate in Polish, did not buy or read Polish-language books, which seriously hindered the rise of the Polish-language publishing industry. (Althoen 2000: ch 6, ch 7; Klemensiewicz 1999: 498)

## **The Partitions and Vernaculars**

In Central Europe the ethnolinguistic model of nation-state predominates. In its framework, people speaking a given language are defined as a nation, and the territory where they reside is proposed to be the nation's polity. That is why Central Europe's nation-states do not recognize more than a single official language, which is invariably fashioned as the national language. The model does not hold sway west of the region, where Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg and Switzerland share German as a national and/or official language. A similar situation occurs also east of Central Europe. In Belarus there are two official languages, Belarusian and Russian. Besides the official Russian, many other languages enjoy official status in the Russian Federation's autonomous entities. In Scandinavia, Finnish and Swedish are co-official in Finland; thus Sweden shares its national language with its eastern neighbor. Similarly, south of Central Europe, Greek is official and national in Greece and Cyprus, while

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<sup>14</sup> Latin remained the official language of the Kingdom of Hungary (or, in modern terms, in Austria's Burgenland, northern and western Croatia, Hungary, northwestern Romania, Slovakia and in Ukraine's Transcarpathia) until 1846, and was to a degree reinstated there in this role during the period 1850-1866.

Croatian and Serbian enjoy co-official status in Bosnia, beside the national language of Bosnian. In addition, Albanian as an official language is shared by Albania and Kosovo.

But the normative urgency of the equation of language with nation in Central Europe is such that it entailed the breakup of Serbo-Croatian into Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian, so the post-Yugoslav states of Bosnia, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia could obtain their own national languages. Likewise, Moldova retains Moldovan as its official and national language, though after its script was changed from Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet, it can be seen to be identical to Romanian. (Kamusella 2006)

This ideological bundling of language and nationalism was proposed first in the early 19th century by German nationalists, in the course of the Napoleonic Wars that destroyed the Holy Roman Empire. It was the shock of the loss of what they considered their political-cum-historical fatherland that made some German-speaking intellectuals propose the German language as the proper defining characteristic of their future nation. (They borrowed the term 'nation' from revolutionary France.) The equation of language with nation spread to every corner of Central Europe from that time on and informed the successive waves of nation-state formation (and sometimes destruction) after World War One, during the subsequent World War, and in the wake of the breakups of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. (Hroch 1985; Schulze 1994: 43-63)

The idea, however, was absent in Poland-Lithuania when the state existed,<sup>15</sup> and gained popularity only in some of the partitioned territories during the second half of the 19th century. What counted in Poland-Lithuania was religion, not language. In the 18th century, Polishness correlated with Catholicism, Ruthenianness with Greek Catholicism and Orthodoxy, Prussianness (Germanness) with Luthernism, and Jewishness with Judaism. At that time Lithuanianness amounted to a regional identity, or patriotic attachment to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, as famously recorded in the opening invocation to Lithuania (that is, the grand duchy) in Adam Mickiewicz's famous epic poem *Pan Tadeusz*.<sup>16</sup> (Mickiewicz 1920: 1) Similarly, the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Poland emphasized their allegiance to 'the Crown' (*Korona*), as shorthand for this polity, and referred to themselves as

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<sup>15</sup> The concept of *gentem lingua facit* ('languages create peoples') originated in the 16th century but remained at the margin of mainstream European politics and thought until the late 18th century. (Althoen 2000: ch 3)

<sup>16</sup> The Polish original of *Pan Tadeusz* was published in Paris in 1834.

'the People of the Crown' (*koroniarze*). (Ališauskas et al 2006: 559, 645; Hrycak 2009: 101-102)

The paramount importance of religion for identificational purposes and for power legitimization (still continuing at the time of the partitions) is also supported by Article 1 of the 1791 Constitution, which elevates 'the sacred Roman Catholic faith' to the status of the 'reigning national religion' in Poland-Lithuania. Not surprisingly then, in the Polish-Lithuania territories seized by Russia, the Uniate (Greek Catholic) Church was abolished in 1796 to weaken Catholicism and bolster Orthodoxy as the ideological mainstay of the Russian Empire. The partial restorations of the Uniate Church in 1798 and 1806 were followed by its abolition in 1839.<sup>17</sup> The faithful were forced to choose between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, the former option obviously encouraged. In contrast, the Habsburgs, in their own partition zone, renamed the Uniate Church as 'Greek Catholic' in 1774 and encouraged its development. They saw their realms as ideologically Catholic, while the Russian tsar perceived his empire as basically Orthodox. (Magocsi 2002: 113)

Present-day valiant attempts at building up statistics on speakers of languages and their nationality in those times amounts to an anachronistic projection into the past of the modern belief that language equates to nation. Although not impossible, such statistics falsely lead one to believe that nations and standard languages as we know them today already existed in the former Poland-Lithuania. Ethnolinguistic nations that nowadays exist on the territory of the former commonwealth were imagined, constructed and finally endowed (some of them) with nation-states between the mid-19th century and the late 20th centuries. Likewise, in a parallel process, their languages were imagined, too, and standardized before becoming full-fledged national and official languages in these national polities. (Cf Anderson 1983, Hroch 1985, Kamusella 2009: 1-148)

Prior to the modern period of ethnolinguistic nationalism in Central Europe, overwhelmingly illiterate populations at large spoke their local dialects and rarely ventured outside their localities of origin. (Gellner 1983: 9) They were peasants (actually serfs until 1848 in the Austrian Empire<sup>18</sup> and Prussia, until 1861 in Russia, and until 1864 in Russia's

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<sup>17</sup> The Uniate Church survived until 1875 in Russia's Congress Kingdom of Poland that did not constitute part of the original Russian partition zone of Poland-Lithuania.

<sup>18</sup> In 1804 during the Napoleonic Wars, fearing the dismantling of the Holy Roman Empire (which did happen in 1806), the Habsburgs reorganized their hereditary lands into an Austrian Empire.

Congress Kingdom of Poland<sup>19</sup>), only tenuously (if at all) linked to their social betters of the same religious persuasion. In reality the social and political gap between peasantry and nobility was much bigger than that between nobles of different confessions. Only ethnolinguistic nationalisms, after a century of strenuous and repeated efforts, managed to close this gap between various social strata which were imagined to speak the same national language. Simultaneously, however, it opened a new chasm between nationally defined groups of people imagined now to speak different languages.

With these caveats we can have a brief look at the partition zones of Poland-Lithuania and their populations. Russia received 62 per cent of the commonwealth's territory and 48 per cent of its population. Its partition zone coincides with today's southern Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus and west central Ukraine. In historical terms, it overlapped with almost the entirety of the grand duchy and of the kingdom's southeastern section, which had belonged to the grand duchy prior to the Union of Lublin (1569). The Habsburgs, who participated only in the first and third partitions, gained 18 per cent of Poland-Lithuania's lands, and 30 per cent of its inhabitants. Today, their zone is split between western Ukraine and southeastern and central Poland. Prussia helped itself to 20 per cent of the Commonwealth's area and 22 per cent of its populace. Nowadays, its sliver of the westernmost swath of the Grand Duchy is divided between Lithuania and Belarus, while the rest of the Prussian zone overlaps with central and northeastern Poland, including the Polish-Lithuanian and Polish capital of Warsaw.

From the linguistic (or rather religious-cum-linguistic) vantage, Polish-speakers (or rather Slavophone Catholics) amounted to ten per cent (600,000) of the inhabitants in the Russian zone. The rest were mainly Greek Catholic and Orthodox Ruthenian-speakers (today's Belarusians and Ukrainians), with a few Yiddish-speaking Jews (ten to 15 per cent), and some Lithuanian- and Latvian-speakers. Such anachronistically construed 'Polish-speakers' added up to 36 per cent (1.4 million) of the population in the Habsburg (Austrian) zone, while Greek Catholic Ruthenian-speakers (today's Ukrainians) made up most of the difference, with a few Yiddish-speaking Jews and some German-speakers (later Austrian Germans and Austrians). The highest share of Polish-speakers, 54 per cent (1.5 million) resided in the Prussian zone, while mainly Lutheran German-speakers (later Prussians and

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<sup>19</sup> Despite the official abolition of serfdom in Russia in 1861, elements of the system continued until the Bolshevik Revolution. (Švankmajer et al 2010: 257-260; Zubov 68-71)

Germans), alongside some Yiddish-speaking Jews and Kashubian-speakers, accounted for the difference. In this way, contrary to what is commonly believed about Prussia as a paragon of Germanness, the country was then clearly of Slavic-Germanic character. (Olczak 2006: 82-83)

### **The Partitioning Powers and Their Language Policies: The Beginnings**

Until the Napoleonic Wars, in Lutheran Prussia the elite, with the monarch and his court at the helm of society, disparaged German as a coarse idiom of the uneducated peasantry. They did not appreciate Latin, either, due to its ideological link with Catholicism. The language's role was limited to a medium of education and scholarship in which a few monographs were published until the mid-19th century. French was preferred as the language of cultural distinction, and of sought-for and appreciated 'enlightenment.' In 1745 French supplanted Latin as the official language of the Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences at Berlin, which entailed a change in its name from the *Societas Regia Scientiarum* to the *Académie Royale des Sciences at Belles-lettres de Prusse*. In 1784, the academy announced a competition for the best work which would explain (or rather 'prove') the thesis that French is the universal language of humanity. This famous competition contributed to the propagation of the myth that this language has such a universal character, which prevails to this day in France and among Francophiles. The winning tract, *Sur l'universalité de la langue française* (On the Universality of the French Language) by Antoine de Rivarol, is still assigned as required reading in French schools. (Schlösser 2005: 78-79)

The elite, however, realized that Prussia's population, which was overwhelmingly Germanic-speaking, and, after the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, of Germanic-Slavic make-up, would not be able to master French in the foreseeable future, because it is, in genetic terms, quite distant from both German and Polish. In recognition of this fact, standard (Meißen) German was employed as the medium of instruction in the system of popular elementary education that began to emerge in the late 18th century. Acquiring this standard was difficult enough for half of Prussia's Germanic-speakers, living on the Baltic littoral, who communicated in Low German. Due to pragmatic considerations, Prussia preserved the Polish-language educational system, functioning in the overwhelmingly Polonophone areas that Berlin gained in the second and third

partitions. The system, however, was gradually made into a bilingual, Polish-German one, with many new schools founded during Prussian rule. But the new schools almost invariably employed German as the exclusive medium of education. In public life, politics, administration and law courts Polish was ubiquitous, though German was preferred as the language within the administrative system and in contacts with the central government at Berlin. When misunderstandings or tense situations arose, the use of French, the noble sociolect, helped defuse them. (Klemensiewicz 1999: 508-509)

In the Russian Empire, as in Prussia, the nobility was enamored of the French language and culture as the sign of sophistication and distinction, clearly differentiating themselves from the illiterate Slavophone peasantry. The situation lasted until Napoleon's onslaught on Russia in 1812. In his *War and Peace*, Lev Tolstoy masterfully depicted the widespread use of French before that year and its waning as the de facto language of politics, social refinement and culture in the wake of the defeat of the Napoleonic armies. In the novel's Russian original, one-third is composed of passages in French, faithfully reflecting this phenomenon and the Frenchified speech of its noble and educated characters.

The Russian language was developed in the second half of the 18th century on the basis of the Slavic dialect of Moscow and prestigious Church Slavonic. In 1724 the Academy of Sciences was founded at St Petersburg to facilitate the modernizing reforms pursued by Peter the Great. Initially, the majority of scholars employed in the institution came from either the Holy Roman Empire or Prussia. Naturally, they spoke in German and knew no Church Slavonic. The question of the language of instruction quickly arose. Church Slavonic was out of question, as it was ideologically and culturally connected to the Orthodox Church, from the influence of which Peter the Great wanted to separate his government and administration. Russian did not yet exist then as a standardized language. (The first authoritative dictionary of it, compiled by the academy, came off the press in 1794, and the second edition in 1822.) The compromise solution proved to be Latin, though the Orthodox clergy tended to disparage it as the 'devil's language,' due to its connection with Catholicism. French supplanted Latin as the academy's medium of communication and instruction in 1803, which necessitated altering its official name from the *Academia Scientiarum Imperialis Petropolitana* to the *Académie Impériale des Sciences de St. Pétersbourg*. Russian became this academy's official language only after the Bolshevik Revolution of

1917. (Issatschenko 1980: 124-127, 133-140; Johnson 1950: 36-37; Russian Academy 2010; Stankiewicz 1984: 124, 133, 143-144)

Polish was preserved as the language of administration and education in Russia's partition zone. From today's point of view this decision appears paradoxical, as the population that we may consider as ethnically Polish constituted less than a tenth of the inhabitants there. What counted, however, was not language, ethnicity or nationalism. These were to become tools of politics a century later. To profit from its participation in the partitions, St Petersburg had to co-opt the Polish-Lithuanian nobility for the imperial modernization project, based on the (Western) European model of development. The nobility's recognition of the legitimacy of the new political organization was of paramount importance. In contrast, the opinion of the overwhelmingly non-Polish (from the linguistic-cum-religious vantage) peasantry or of Jews did not count, as they had no voice in politics either in Poland-Lithuania or in Russia.

In the lands annexed by Russia during the first partition, one year before the dissolution of the Society of Jesus, the Jesuit educational system remained intact, complete with Latin as the medium of instruction. After the 1773 dissolution of their order, Catherine the Great preserved the Jesuits in Russia, whom she also entrusted with the educational system of the Commission of National Education in the lands gained during the second and third partitions. This led to the fortification of Latin as the language of instruction vis-à-vis Polish. The subsequent expulsion of the Jesuits from Russia in 1820 (six years after the papal reversal of the suppression of their order) tipped the balance in favor of Polish as the medium of education in the Russian zone of partition. (Palmieri 1912) But in Courland, German retained this function as it did elsewhere in Russia's Baltic provinces that today are included within the frontiers of Latvia and Estonia. (Kiaupa 2002: 94)

Despite the reforms of the Commission of National Education, Latin remained the main language of instruction at the Wilno Academy. This, together with the Cracow Academy, designated as 'main schools,' were the tertiary-level institutions of the educational system instituted by the Commission of National Education. But unlike its Cracow counterpart, the Wilno Academy failed to spearhead the introduction and popularization of Polish as the educational system's language of instruction. (Baliński 1862: 378; Klemensiewicz 1999: 502)



In the wake of the reforms initiated by Tsar Alexander I, a gradual change in the role of Latin came after 1803 when the Wilno Academy was reorganized and elevated to the rank of the Imperial University of Wilno. The university became the central institution of the Educational District of Wilno, based on the model of the educational system of Poland-Lithuania's Commission of National Education. At that time six other educational districts of the same kind were established across European Russia. But the Wilno District educated close to 60 per cent of the total number of students in all the seven districts. Russian-language education was offered to around one-third of the students in the educational districts of Kazan, Kharkov (today Kharkiv in Ukraine), St Petersburg and Moscow. Ten per cent of the students received education in German in the educational district of Dorpat (today, Tartu in Estonia), which also covered Poland-Lithuania's Courland. (Johnson 1950: 76-77)

With the exception of Courland, the Educational District of Wilno catered for the whole Russian partition zone of Poland-Lithuania, with the addition of the region of Kiev (today, Kyiv in Ukraine), gained by Muscovy from Poland-Lithuania in 1667. Until the early 1830s, the Imperial University of Wilno was also the largest university in the whole of Russia. Ergo, in the early 19th century, in Russia the largest group of literate persons read and wrote in Polish, and the same was true of university graduates. There were definitely more people literate in Polish and with Polish-language university education in Russia than their Russian-language counterparts. This was so due to the better economic, social and cultural development of the Polish-Lithuanian lands in comparison to Russia proper. Russian tsars realized it clearly and strove to utilize this social capital for the modernization (that is, Westernization) of their empire. But the reforms of the Commission of National Education being of quite a recent date before the final partition of Poland-Lithuania, one should not overestimate the role of Polish as the language of instruction in Russia's Educational District of Wilno. For instance, the language rubbed shoulders with Latin until the early 1820s. Polish supplanted Latin (and also French and English) as the language of most lectures at Imperial University of Wilno as late as 1816. (Aleksandravičius 2003: 264-265)

Language policies, as pursued in the Habsburg lands, differed markedly from those in the Russian Empire. The administrative and modernizing reforms on which Maria Theresa and Joseph II embarked during the second half of the 18th century were intended to centralize the Habsburg lands and to streamline their administration and organization. Language was one of the instruments to this end. In

1784, Joseph II issued an edict that provided for the replacement of Latin with German as the language of administration. In the early 1790s, the backlash against the brunt of these disliked reforms from above caused the rolling back of some of them. Nevertheless the language edict remained in force, except in the Kingdom of Hungary where Latin was reinstated. (Kann 1977: 183-187, 203-204)

This wavering in the implementation of reforms preserved Latin (alongside the increasingly dominant German) as a medium of instruction in the educational system inherited from the Jesuits, in the framework of which the idea of popular elementary education took root in the last two decades of the 18th century. (Kann 1977: 193) In the lands taken from Poland-Lithuania during the first partition, untouched by the reforms of the Commission of National Education, the Latin-language system of education was intact. After 1784 German was added to it, and in the same year a University of Lemberg (today, Lviv in Ukraine) was founded for these lands. The university's languages of instruction were Latin and German. In the final (third) partition of Poland-Lithuania, the Habsburgs gained Cracow with the Cracow Academy, or the leading tertiary institution of the educational system as organized by the Commission of National Education. In line with the language edict of 1784, German superseded Polish as the academy's medium of instruction and lectures in 1805. (Klemensiewicz 1999: 508) For a brief period of four years there was no university-level school which would offer education in Polish on the territory of the former Poland-Lithuania, that is, until 1809 when the Cracow Academy was re-Polonized in the Duchy of Warsaw. Not that this possibility was painfully missed, as seen in the case of the Imperial University of Wilno, where, despite specific provisions to this end, Polish failed to become established as the language of instruction there until 1816.

## **Changes**

The modicum of new political order established after the partitions of Poland-Lithuania at the turn of the 19th century was rapidly undone by the Napoleonic Wars. France lent its ear to a handful of Polish-Lithuanian nobles who dreamed on the reestablishment of their commonwealth. After the defeat of Prussia in 1807 and the Austrian Empire two years later, Napoleon founded a Duchy of Warsaw as a French protectorate to guarantee continued support among the Polish-Lithuanian nobility for his military endeavors. They naively believed it was the first step to the later resurgence of Poland-Lithuania, though it

is doubtful that Napoleon would have wished to complicate his political calculations with such a territorially extensive polity.

The duchy was composed of the lands that Prussia annexed in the second and third partitions (with the addition of the southernmost sliver of territory from the state's first partition zone), and the Habsburgs in the third partition. Because Germanicophone Gdańsk and its Kashubian-speaking vicinity, which Prussia obtained in the second partition, were separated by Prussian territory from the duchy, it was transformed into a separate French protectorate of the Free City of Danzig. The area of the Duchy of Warsaw was more than one-fifth of Poland-Lithuania's territory, though its population of 4.3 million accounted for more than one-third of the former commonwealth's inhabitants. (Olczak 2006: 92-93)

As in the case of Poland-Lithuania and its 1791 constitution, the 1807 constitution of the Duchy of Warsaw, in article 1, emphasized Roman Catholicism as the religion of the state. The first-ever legal provision for Polish as an official language was an afterthought, made in the decree on the acquisition and loss of citizenship, issued on December 19, 1807. In article 1.7 it provided that a person could be naturalized in the duchy after ten years of continuous residence and having become proficient in Polish. (Kallas and Krzymkowski 2006: 50, 64)

The duchy's educational system was speedily organized on the basis of the model worked out by the Commission of National Education. German and Latin were replaced by Polish as the sole medium of education. In 1809 the system was crowned with the Cracow Academy, where Polish also supplanted German. The duchy's government supported the compilation and publication the first-ever authoritative dictionary of the Polish language, written by Samuel Bogumił Linde, which came off the press at the duchy's capital, Warsaw, between 1807 and 1814. Linde modeled his dictionary on the first authoritative dictionary of the German language (1766-1786), compiled by Johann Christoph Adelung. Among other places, Linde had studied in Leipzig (in the Kingdom of Saxony), where Adelung was busy preparing the second edition of his dictionary (1793-1801). (Deutsche Sprache 1889: 788-789; Klemensiewicz 1999: 512; Przyłubski 1955: 32, 90-82)

The creation of this duchy and its strong involvement with the French administrative, military and social elite functioned as the main conveyor belt for various revolutionary ideas, including nationalism, from France to the lands of the former Poland-Lithuania. This

phenomenon was strengthened by the direct experience of German nationalism that emerged in Prussia and the Holy Roman Empire in response to the French military onslaught. And, perhaps most importantly from the ethnolinguistic perspective, this duchy was the first Polish state in modern times. It is estimated that Poles (or Slavophone Catholics) accounted for a 79 per cent of its inhabitants, while the rest was composed from Jews (7 per cent), Ruthenians (7 per cent), and Germans (6 per cent). (Olczak 2006: 93)

Napoleon's defeat at Moscow meant the end of the Duchy of Warsaw. At the Congress of Vienna (1815) it was deprived of the lands that Prussia had gained in the second partition. Its share of the former Duchy of Warsaw was organized into an autonomous Grand Duchy of Posen (today, Poznań in Poland) with German and Polish as co-official languages. In practice German quickly came to dominate in administration and secondary schools, whereas bilingualism was retained in elementary education and in local administration. (Klemensiewicz 1999: 515, Olczak 2006: 95)

Cracow and its vicinity was transformed into a Free City of Cracow under the joint protection of all three partitioning powers, but in reality Austria extended its control over the statelet. Article 20 of its 1815 constitution made Polish its sole official language. The Cracow Academy continued to function as the main Polish-language institution of tertiary education and in 1818 was renamed the Jagiellonian University after the Jagiellonian Dynasty, who had created Poland-Lithuania. It clearly showed the attachment of Cracow's section of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility to the idea of the recreation of their defunct commonwealth.

The university enjoyed autonomy and participated in the Free City's government. The partitioning powers promised free passage of Polish-Lithuanian nobles' sons from their partition zones to study at the university, but this provision was observed more in the breach than in the observance. Nevertheless, the relative freedom and independence of this ethnolinguistically Polish polity of the Free City of Cracow attracted economic and political migrants from the adjacent territories, Austria's Galicia and Russia's Congress Kingdom. Thus, the free city's population soared from 88,000 in 1815 to 146,000 in 1843. Slavophone Catholics ('Poles') constituted 85 per cent of the inhabitants, followed by 11.5 per cent of Yiddish-speaking Jews, and 3.5 per cent of other Christians, namely Protestants ('Germans') and Orthodox and Greek Catholic Ruthenians ('Ukrainians'). (Jakimyszyn

2008: 41-42; Kallas and Krzymkowski 2006: 177, 180, 182; Klemensiewicz 1999: 517)

The rest of the lands of the former Duchy of Warsaw were organized as a Kingdom of Poland, united with the Russian Empire in a real and personal union with the tsar reigning in it as Polish King. Because this new kingdom was conceived at the Congress of Vienna (1815) and was much smaller than the old commonwealth's Kingdom of Poland, the successor of the Duchy of Warsaw is conventionally referred to as the 'Congress Kingdom [of Poland],' or even more informally as 'Congress Poland.' Its population of 3.3 million increased sharply to 4.14 million between 1816 and 1827. Still, with 75 per cent of the population composed of confessionally and linguistically defined Poles, it was an ethnically Polish polity. (Olczak 2006: 95)

In 1815 Tsar Alexander I granted the Congress Kingdom a liberal constitution that was the first-ever document of this rank making Polish the official language (article 28) on a considerable territory derived from the former Poland-Lithuania. The constitution also tentatively decoupled religion from the definition of Polishness. It recognized the importance of Roman Catholicism as the confession of the majority of the population, but also granted equality to other 'Christian religions' (namely, Orthodoxy, Greek Catholicism, Lutheranism and Armenian monophysitism) and persons professing them (article 11). Largely repeating the provisions of the constitution of the Duchy of Warsaw, the Congress Kingdom's constitution made naturalization of foreigners conditional on continuous residency in the country for at least five years and on the acquisition of the Polish language (article 33). (Kallas and Krzymkowski 2006: 98-100)

In 1816, a Royal<sup>20</sup> University of Warsaw was founded with Polish as the language of instruction, which coincided with the replacement of Latin and other languages with Polish as the language of lectures at the Imperial University of Wilno. The Polish-language educational system of the Duchy of Warsaw was adopted in the Congress Kingdom and rapidly developed. The number of schools increased from 720 to 1222 between 1816 and 1821. The dynamics of the development of the Polish-language educational system were similar to those in the partition zone of Russia proper. In the Educational District of Wilno the number of Polish-language school grew from 70 in 1803 to 430 in

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<sup>20</sup> The tsar reigned in the Congress Kingdom as the Polish king, so institutions established by him there were termed 'royal' in contrast to 'imperial' ones in Russia proper.

1820. The policy of co-opting the Polish-Lithuanian nobility for the sake of the modernization of Russia was in full swing. (Dolbilov and Miller 2007: 92, 96; Klemensiewicz 1999: 516)

The Russian policy of preserving Polish as the language of administration in its partition zone of Poland-Lithuania and in the Congress Kingdom, coupled with the rapid development of the Polish-language educational systems in both areas, achieved something that had eluded reformers from Poland-Lithuania's Commission of National Education. The Russian authorities' decisions created a genuine, though nascent, Polish-language book market whose mainstay was the production of textbooks for the two Polish-language educational systems. These developments convinced many Polish-Lithuanian nobles and the coalescing Polish intelligentsia who emerged from among the nobles that it was practical and advisable to buy and read Polish-language books. It was then in the Polish ethnonational case that the epoch of vernacular print-capitalism tentatively commenced, so crucial for imagining any nation into existence. Of 104 Polish-language books published in 1818, 61 (59 per cent) came off the press in the Congress Kingdom, 27 (26 per cent) in the Russian partition zone and one in St Petersburg, so that 89 in total (86 per cent) were published in the territories of the Russian Empire. Outside the empire, nine Polish-language titles were published in the Free City of Cracow, and six in Prussia proper at Breslau (today, Wrocław in Poland). (Althoen 2000: ch 7; Anderson 1983: 37-46)

The political situation in the Congress Kingdom and the Russian partition began to change when segments of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility realized that the tsar was not eager to reestablish Poland-Lithuania, as some hoped, nor even to extend the Congress Kingdom eastward so that the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania could be contained within the kingdom's frontiers. Furthermore, many provisions of the constitution of the Congress Kingdom were not observed. The economic and cultural development of the Polish-Lithuanian lands, with the official use of the Polish language but inside the Russian Empire, appeared then to be unsatisfactory to many Polish-Lithuanian nobles. As a result a noble anti-Russian uprising broke out in 1830.<sup>21</sup> In the following year the insurrectionists dethroned the tsar in the Congress Kingdom, but the uprising was summarily suppressed. Nobles were no match for the Russian standing army. (Dolbilov and Miller 2007: 91, 96)

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<sup>21</sup> In Polish terminology this event is usually dubbed as the 'November Uprising,' because it broke out during this month in 1830.

The tsar then limited the autonomy of the Congress Kingdom, and replaced its constitution with an organic statute (a document of lower rank than a constitution, though in the function of a constitution). The Royal University of Warsaw was liquidated immediately after the uprising. In 1837 the Polish term 'voivodeship' (*województwo*) for the kingdom's administrative regions was replaced with the Russian one of 'guberniia.' Polish was retained as the kingdom's official language and language of education, but as of 1840 the authorities recommended Russian as a compulsory subject. In Lutheran schools Polish was supplanted with German and in Jewish ones with Hebrew as the media of instruction. (Kallas and Krzymkowski 2006: 113, 124; Klemensiewicz 1999: 517)

The change in language and educational policies triggered off by the failed uprising was more profound in Russia's partition zone of Poland-Lithuania. Russia's largest university, the Imperial University of Wilno was dissolved in 1832, and its assets transferred to Kiev, where on their basis a Russian-medium St Vladimir University was founded two years later. In 1831-1832, the language of administration and education was changed from Polish to Russian, and local Polish-Lithuanian nobles were excluded from the civil service. Polish survived as a subject in secondary schools until 1839. The subject continued in a small way in private schools but was finally banned in 1854. In 1840, the Lithuanian Statute, or the law code of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which served in Russia's partition zone as the basis of law, was replaced with mainstream Russian law. From the administrative and legal point of view, the former grand duchy's land became ordinary Russian guberniias. Despite these measures, Polish (alongside French) remained a language of social refinement and advancement, popularly spoken from Vilna (today, Vilnius in Lithuania) to Kiev (today, Kyiv in Ukraine). For non-Polish Slavophones it was easier to master it than French. (Aleksandravičius and Kulakauskas 2003: 79-80; Klemensiewicz 1999: 517-518)

Following the defeat of the 1830-1831 uprising, the center of Polish political life moved to the Free City of Cracow with its Jagiellonian University. In 1846, the polity became the stage on which an attempt to incite another uprising in all the partition zones was played out. The initiative failed, and led to the dissolution of the free city. It was incorporated into Vienna's crownland of Galicia, which included all the Polish-Lithuanian lands in the Habsburgs' possession. Polish was replaced with German as the language of administration and education. Likewise German supplanted Polish as the medium of

instruction at the Jagiellonian University, too, though this was a gradual process that lasted until the early 1850s. (Cienciała 1931: 62)

After 1846, there was no Polish-medium university until 1862, when another one, the short-lived Main School, was founded in Warsaw. However, Polish-language periodicals and books were published and distributed across all the partition zones, and also in the old centers of Polish-language publishing in Berlin, Breslau, Dresden and Leipzig.

### **The Time of Ethnolinguistic Nationalisms**

Russia's defeat in the Crimean War (1853-1856) convinced Tsar Alexander II, who had just ascended the throne, to renew the modernizing and liberalizing course in order to ensure that the empire kept its status of a great power. It meant some cultural and political concessions for the Polish-Lithuanian nobility and the new class of Polish intelligentsia (who had emerged from the nobility) in the Russian partition zone and in the Congress Kingdom. In 1856 Polish was reintroduced as a subject in secondary schools in the partition zone (that is, two years after it had been banned), and the production of Polish-language books and journals resumed there. In 1861 a new semi-authoritative dictionary of the Polish language (quite an improvement on Linde's antiquated dictionary) was published in Vil'na (today, Vilnius in Lithuania). A year later, in 1862, the Congress Kingdom's system of education was reorganized in line with the model that had once been employed in the Napoleonic Duchy of Warsaw. The role of Polish as the sole medium of education was confirmed. This entailed a curb on the teaching of Russian, and the introduction of Polish as a language of education in Jewish schools. Also in 1862, a Polish-language university, the Main School of Warsaw was established. (Aleksandravičius and Kulakauskas 2003: 85-86; Klemensiewicz 1999: 518)

These changes, which Polish nationalists interpreted as successes for their nation-in-making, were short-lived. The nationalists began to formulate their program of Poland as an ethnolinguistic nation-state composed from all the contiguous territories continuously inhabited by Polish-speakers, while noble politicians still dreamed of the re-establishment of a Poland-Lithuania. The limits of tsarist liberalism were tested by Polish-Lithuanian nobles in 1860, when in reply to their request to re-establish the Polish-medium University of Wilno, Alexander II refused, arguing that the former Grand Duchy of



Lithuania was an integral part of the Russian lands, not of Poland. (Aleksandravičius and Kulakauskas 2003: 87)

In 1863-1864 another noble anti-Russian uprising,<sup>22</sup> summarily suppressed, led to an immediate backlash. The recent concessions were revoked and the novel policy began to be implemented of introducing Russian as the sole language of administration and education across the empire (especially in its European part). In the Russian partition zone Polish as a subject was banned from all schools and the Polish-language publishing industry was liquidated. Measures were taken to push the remnants of Polish from the public sphere to the private. Repressive measures against the Catholic Church had caused the conversion of 40,000 Catholics to Orthodoxy by 1866. The embryonic use of Lithuanian, Little Russian (Ukrainian) and White Russian (Belarusian) was perceived as supportive of the Polish cause (often dubbed as 'Polish intrigue'), due to the origin of these languages in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Subsequently, the production of Little Russian books was banned in 1863 and of White Russian ones in 1865. In 1876, a ban on the importation of Little Ruthenian (Ukrainian) books from Austria-Hungary's Galicia was introduced. In 1864, the printing of books in Lithuanian (and Samogitian<sup>23</sup>) with the use of the 'Polish alphabet' (that is, Latin script) was prohibited, followed in 1872 by the ban on the importation of Lithuanian-language publications in the Gothic (Fraktur) type of the Latin script from the German Empire's Prussia. (Aleksandravičius and Kulakauskas 2003: 90, 93, 95; Rodkiewicz 1998: 182-208)

The autonomy of the Congress Kingdom was abolished, and in 1866 its territory was included in the homogenous administrative network of other Russian guberniias. Without any official provision to this end, the name of the Kingdom of Poland was gradually erased from public use and replaced with that of the Vistula Land, at first in popular usage, and by the 1880s in official documents. (Szwarc 1990: 208-209) Russian replaced Polish entirely in the function of the kingdom's official language. The Main School of Warsaw did not reopen after the uprising, and in 1869 it was transformed into a Russian-medium Imperial University of Warsaw. Similarly, Russian supplanted Polish as

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<sup>22</sup> In Polish literature it is known as the 'January Uprising,' as it broke out in this month of 1863.

<sup>23</sup> In the Russian Empire, Lithuanian and Samogitian were construed as similar but separate two Baltic languages. Samogitia, as a distinctive region, survived in the Russian partition zone in the form of the Guberniia of Kovno (today, Kaunas in Lithuania). After Lithuania regained independence in 1991, Samogitian revived as language in its own right.

the language of instruction, first in secondary schools (1869) and later in elementary education (1885). (Kallas and Krzymkowski 2006: 125-126, 161-164; Klemensiewicz 1999: 518)

The situation of the Polish language in the Congress Kingdom of Poland and the Russian partition zone became almost the same. The difference was that Polish-language publishing survived in the Kingdom, and the Kingdom's population was overwhelmingly Polonophone. In the partition zone Polish was the sociolect of the nobility, and non-Poles (that is, non-Catholics) had to acquire it, if they aspired to join the elite there through the route of education or entrepreneurship. After the 1863-1864 uprising, however, Russian began to serve the same end too, and gradually it replaced Polish as the language of social advancement. In the Congress Kingdom, where Polish remained the spoken and written language of the vast majority of the inhabitants, Russian did not appear to be an attractive alternative, but French and German did. Moreover, in Austria-Hungary's autonomous Crownland of Galicia, with Polish as its official language, a Pole from the Congress Kingdom could pursue education and a career through this language. The policy of Russification was also thwarted by the fact that compulsory elementary education, strenuously implemented and enforced in Prussia (Germany) and Austria-Hungary, was not introduced in Russia until after the Bolshevik Revolution. In this way, Russification failed to touch the uneducated and illiterate peasant masses.

In the second half of the 19th century ethnolinguistic nationalism was becoming a significant instrument of mass political mobilization and power legitimization. The realization of this fact caused the partitioning powers to play the card of the Polish language, and made Polish-Lithuanian nobles and Polish intellectuals cry foul when the status of this language was lowered or its use curbed in the lands of the former Poland-Lithuania. 'Language wars' ushered the age of nationalism across the length and breadth of Central Europe.

Between 1803 and 1830, the position of Polish as the language of administration and education was excellent (to the de facto exclusion of Russian) in the ethnolinguistically non-Polish Russian partition zone. An even better position for this language, including the function of the official language of an autonomous polity was ensured between 1807 and 1863 in the ethnolinguistically Polish Duchy of Warsaw and its successor, the Congress Kingdom of Poland, and between 1815 and 1846, in the Free City of Cracow, too. In all the cases it was a sop, either of Napoleon, the Russian tsar, or the Austrian Emperor to the

Polish-Lithuanian nobility, and after the mid-19th century to the forming Polish intelligentsia. Then it was a small price to be paid for securing the nobility's and intelligentsia's acceptance of the new political order and their participation in the war effort of the Napoleonic armies or in the modernization of the Russian Empire. The stakes went up considerably when the political equation of language with nation began to acquire a normative character in Central Europe. The force of this equation became obvious when the Kingdom of Italy was founded as an ethnolinguistic nation-state of Italian-speakers in 1861, and the German Empire as a national polity of German-speakers ten years later.

The establishment of the German Empire precipitated a serious change in language politics in the Prussian (German) and Austrian partition zones. In Prussia's post-1815 Grand Duchy of Posen the dominance of Polish was gradually scaled down. In 1832 German-Polish bilingualism in administration was replaced with German monolingualism, in the framework of which Polish was relegated to the status of an auxiliary language. This arrangement was similar to the situation in West Prussia, meaning most of the lands that Prussia had gained in the first partition of Poland-Lithuania.

Ten years later, in 1842, German was introduced as a compulsory subject in the Polish-language elementary schools in the Grand Duchy of Posen. This trend of establishing the predominance of German in public life and education was reversed due to the events of the revolutionary year of 1848. Various ethnolinguistically defined mass national movements and armies contended then across Central Europe, endangering the existence of the Austrian Empire and Prussia. A noble Polish-Lithuanian uprising in the Grand Duchy of Posen led to the administrative division of this grand duchy into German and Polish sections, the latter with Polish as the exclusive language of administration. The suppression of the national revolutions in Central Europe at the turn of 1849, with the aid of Russian armies, annulled the Polish gains in the Grand Duchy of Posen, when the non-national order was restored. German and Polish continued as co-official languages in the grand duchy and Polish retained its status of an auxiliary language in West Prussia. Polish-language and bilingual, Polish-German, Catholic<sup>24</sup> secondary and elementary schools continued

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<sup>24</sup> The educational system in Prussia (and then in the German Empire) was organized along confessional lines. The Catholic Church controlled its section of the system in areas populated by Catholics and the Lutheran-Calvinist Evangelical-Christian Church of the Prussian Union of 1817 controlled that of the Protestant regions.

to operate in both Prussian regions. (Kallas and Krzymkowski 2006: 203, 211, 215-216; Klemensiewicz 1999: 520; Olczak 2006: 104-105)

The founding of the German Empire in 1871 brought about the homogenization of the administrative divisions of Prussia as a constitutive part of the Empire. In 1873, the Grand Duchy of Posen was transformed into a conventional Prussian province with German as its sole official language. Likewise, the auxiliary status of Polish was revoked in West Prussia. In 1876 languages<sup>25</sup> other than German were also excluded from local government and law courts across the German Empire. The polity became a monolingual German nation-state. In 1887, Polish as a subject was removed from elementary schools in the Province of Posen and West Prussia. The same measure was applied to middle and secondary schools in 1890 and 1894, respectively. Until 1900 religion instruction was provided in Polish for Slavophone Catholics (Poles and Kashubs) in both provinces, but from then on it was available exclusively in German. After 1907 children not knowing German were not to be accepted into elementary schools in the Province of Posen. In 1908, a law was promulgated that forbade the use of Polish at public gatherings in those counties where fewer than 60 per cent of the inhabitants spoke Polish as their native language. Because of this measure and of fully enforced compulsory elementary education, almost all Catholic Slavophones and other non-German-speakers acquired at least a working knowledge of the German language across the German Empire prior to the 20th century. (Kallas and Krzymkowski 2006: 218, 222; Klemensiewicz 1999: 520-521)

After the anti-Russian uprising of 1863-1864 Polish ceased to be a language of state administration and of university-level education anywhere in the partitioned lands of Poland-Lithuania. But this state of affairs did not last long. In the wake of the defeat sustained at Prussian hands in 1866, the absolutist Austrian Empire had to reinvent itself in order to retain its territorial integrity and to regain legitimacy in the eyes of its inhabitants. The endeavor yielded a liberal Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary. In the Austrian half of this novel polity, Vienna faced the staunch opposition of Bohemia's Czech politicians to this solution which seemed to sideline the empire's Slavs. In order to gain a working majority in the Reichsrat (Imperial Parliament), the Habsburgs granted wide-ranging political and cultural autonomy to the Polish-Lithuanian nobles in the Crownland of Galicia. (Kann and David 1984: 301-303; Veber 2009: 419-425)

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<sup>25</sup> Danish, French, Lithuanian, Polish and Sorbian.

In 1867, Galicia became an autonomous crownland, and two years later Polish supplanted German as the crownland's official language. In the eastern half of Galicia, inhabited mainly by Greek Catholics and some Orthodox people speaking (Little) Ruthenian (Ukrainian), this language was introduced there as co-official, too. In the field of education, in 1867 Polish and Ruthenian became languages of education in elementary and secondary schools. German was retained as a compulsory subject beginning with the third year of elementary school. Polish supplanted German at the Jagiellonian University in 1870 and at the University of Lwów (today, Lviv in Ukraine) between 1871 and 1874. In addition, numerous Ruthenian-language departments were established at both universities.

In furthering these momentous changes, the second edition of Linde's dictionary of the Polish language, published at Lemberg (Lviv), between 1854 and 1860, was of much help. Other specialist, mono- and bilingual dictionaries (Polish-German and Polish-Ruthenian) based on it ushered the Polish language into the world of modernity. It had to describe the economy, politics, culture and technology in Galicia as German did in the German Empire or Russian in the Russian Empire. Standard Polish as a modern language acquired its decisive shape in Galicia. To a lesser degree the same was true of the gradually elevated role of Ruthenian (Ukrainian). Thanks to the development of those Polish and Ruthenian mass political parties that also began to involve peasants at the turn of the 20th century, Polish and Ruthenian (Ukrainian) nationalisms became lively political ideas with their utmost goals of creating their respective ethnolinguistic nation-states. To this end Ukrainian politicians demanded to split Galicia into two separate, Polish and Ukrainian, crownlands.<sup>26</sup> (Kallas and Krzymkowski 2006: 243-244, 252-253; Klemensiewicz 1999: 523-525; Snyder 2003: 129)

## **The Great War and Ethnolinguistic Nation-States**

The situation as described above remained unchanged until the outbreak of World War One, with the qualified exception of the Russian Empire. St Petersburg's defeat sustained in its war against Japan (1904-1905) triggered off the 1905 revolution that necessitated the

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<sup>26</sup> The wish was granted but in a manner not foreseen by any of the nationalists. It was Stalin and Hitler who split Galicia along such ethnolinguistic lines in the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The division was renewed when the postwar Soviet-Polish border was established in 1945. Today, in part, it serves as the Ukrainian-Polish frontier, after Ukraine gained independence in 1991.

introduction of liberal reforms and elements of democracy. In the case of the Congress Kingdom of Poland and the Russian partition zone, it meant the revocation of the ban on printing Lithuanian (and Samogitian) publications in Latin characters (1904) and of the ban on the production of publications in Little Russian (Ukrainian) and White Russian (Belarusian) (1905). These measures strengthened the emerging Lithuanian and Ukrainian national movements and contributed to the creation of a Belarusian national movement. The Ukrainian national movement in Russia received a boost from the autonomous Galicia, where it had developed quite freely since 1867. The Polish-language publishing industry revived in the Russian partition zone, and private secondary schools in the Congress Kingdom of Poland were allowed to teach in Polish all subjects except history, geography and Russian. In the partition zone, Polish-language education tended to be imparted privately by impoverished nobles. The commonality of the political and cultural elite of the former Poland-Lithuania was over. On the territory of the old Commonwealth people began to see themselves as belonging to one nation or another, depending on which language they happened to speak, or rather thought that they spoke. (Aleksandravičius and Kulakauskas 2003: 339, 346; Dolbilov and Miller 2007: 383-388; Klemensiewicz 1999: 519-520; Sahanovič and Šybieka 2006: 132-139; Zubov 2009: 152-176, 259-261)

After the outbreak of the Great War, in 1914-1915 the German Empire and Austria-Hungary occupied the territory of Congress Poland and the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, including Courland. Congress Poland found itself under joint German and Austro-Hungarian occupation, and in 1916 was made into the core of a future Polish state to be known as the Regency Kingdom of Poland (*Regentschaftskönigreich Polen*). The former grand duchy and Courland, occupied by German troops, were transformed into the semi-polity of the Land Ober Ost (literally, 'Land of the Upper East'). Austria-Hungary also seized the Russian Guberniia of Volhynia in 1916.

Berlin allied with Vienna aspired to build a Germanic Mitteleuropa (Central Europe) as an economic-cum-political bloc centered on the German Empire and Austria-Hungary. The process was facilitated by the evacuation of two million Russian civil servants and their families, who fled before the advancing German and Austro-Hungarian armies from Russia's western territories seized by Berlin and Vienna. Russian was banned in the Regency Kingdom of Poland. German functioned as the official language at the top level of administration, but Polish became the kingdom's official language. Polish also supplanted Russian

as the sole language of education. This necessitated an inflow from Galicia of civil servants and teachers literate in Polish at the secondary school and university levels. In place of the Imperial University of Warsaw (whose Russian staff, alongside much equipment, were evacuated into Russia to avoid falling into the hands of advancing German and Austro-Hungarian troops), a Polish-language University of Warsaw was founded in 1915. A Galician-style Polish-language educational system developed in the Kingdom. The number of schools rose from 5,855 in 1914 to 8,883 in 1917. The Kingdom became another ethnolinguistically Polish polity, side by side with Galicia. But the Kingdom had the advantage of a clear Polish majority among its inhabitants, while in Galicia half of the population were Ruthenians (Ukrainians). (Kallas and Krzymkowski 2006: 263; Klemensiewicz 1999: 519, 525; Naumann 1915; Zubov 2009: 356-359)

Ruthenians from Galicia developed a similar Ruthenian-language educational system in occupied Volhynia, based on their Ruthenian-medium system in the crownland. The first-ever Ukrainian-language schools were established in this Russian province in 1916-1917. Obviously, Russian was banned. Similar policies were pursued on a much larger scale in the Land Ober Ost. Russian and Cyrillic were banned. German was introduced at the top echelon of administration, alongside Polish. With time, because Polish was better known and more easily understood by Slavophones than German, it became the polity's lingua franca, except in Courland. Polish-language schools were reopened and new ones established. But the German occupation authorities did not want the Land Ober Ost to join a postwar Poland; this land was to become an integral part of Germanic Mitteleuropa. To this end, for the first time in history Belarusian (in the Latin script), Latvian, Lithuanian and Yiddish were made into co-official languages, and national educational systems were established with these languages as their respective media of instruction. (Hrycak 2000: 121; Kaiupa 2002: 129-131; Rachuba 2008: 330-334; Sahanovič and Šybieka 2006: 140-143; Szybieka 2002: 186-191)

These developments gave an unforeseeable boost to various ethnolinguistic national movements. The economic near-collapse of the Central Powers at the end of the war, and the destruction of the Russian Empire in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution (1917) opened the way for the creation of ethnolinguistic nation-states. The independence of Ukraine was declared in 1917, and in early 1918 Belarus, Latvia and Lithuania also proclaimed their independence. To a degree Berlin encouraged and protected these polities, wishing them to create a buffer zone between the German Empire and Bolshevik

Russia. In 1917, Jews secured from Britain the Balfour declaration to found a Jewish nation-state in Palestine. This was the cornerstone of the popularity of Zionism, or Jewish ethnolinguistic and religious nationalism, among Jewish communities in interwar Central Europe.

Poland was a latecomer to this game of nation-state building, because of the conflict between Polish ethnolinguistic nationalists who wanted a Poland composed from lands inhabited by Polish-speakers and the inheritors of noble politics who aimed at the recreation of Poland-Lithuania. In addition, neither Berlin nor Vienna was eager to give up their own partition zones, while the German occupation authorities of the Land Ober Ost excluded the possibility of incorporating it into a postwar Poland. The breakup of Austria-Hungary in late 1918 left Galicia to its own devices and allowed for the proclamation of an independent Poland. In late 1918 a successful Polish uprising against the German Empire broke out in the Province of Posen. Between 1918 and 1919 Polish and Ukrainian troops fought over eastern Galicia, and in 1919 Polish irregulars seized the region of Vilnius (Wilno) from Lithuania. This region also constituted the bone of contention between Lithuania and Belarus, as both the national movements saw Vilnius / Vil'na as their capital.

Between 1920 and 1921, the Bolsheviks attacked Poland, hoping to seize the lands lost by the Russian Empire after 1914, and to spread communist revolution to Western Europe. The surprising Polish victory secured Poland's eastern border, though it led to the division of Belarus and Ukraine between this country and Bolshevik Russia. The division was the result of an uneasy compromise between Polish ethnolinguistic nationalists and successors of the Polish-Lithuanian political ethos. The former agreed to accept some ethnically non-Polish lands, as long as they could be realistically Polonized in the span of a single generation. The latter consented because they wanted more territories of former Poland-Lithuania in the new Poland. (Olczak 2006: 112-113)

In the terms of the three partitions of Poland-Lithuania, interwar Poland was created from the entire Austrian partition zone, almost the whole Prussian (German) partition zone (with the exception of Ermland [Warmia], and Gdańsk and its vicinity, the latter made into a Free City of Danzig), and from the central and southern two-thirds of the lands which Russia had gained in the third partition, together with the westernmost sliver centered on Pińsk (today, Pinsk in Belarus) of the swath of territory annexed by Russia in the second partition. In comparison with Poland-Lithuania, interwar Poland's area amounted to



52 per cent of the former polity's territory in 1771. Ethnic Poles (overwhelming Polish-speaking Catholics) amounted to two-thirds of the 32 million inhabitants in the early 1930s. (Olczak 2006: 83, 129, 135, 137)

Significantly, some non-partition territories that had never been part of Poland-Lithuania were also incorporated into the Polish nation-state-in-making. They were obtained in 1920 from the division of the defunct Austria-Hungary's Crownland of Austrian Silesia between Czechoslovakia and Poland, and two years later, from the split of Germany's Upper Silesia between the German Empire and Poland. These events were preceded by Poland's conflicts with Czechoslovakia and Germany. Chunks of Austrian Silesia and Prussian Silesia gained by Poland were molded into the autonomous Silesian Voivodeship of 5,100 sq km, with 1.5 million inhabitants in 1931. The authorities claimed it to be the most Polish of all Poland's region from the ethnolinguistic vantage. But if the non-recognized ethnolinguistic group(s) of Silesians had been included in the ethnic purview, it would have made Poles into an insignificant minority. What Poland gained was most of continental Europe's second largest industrial and coal mining basin, located in eastern Upper Silesia.<sup>27</sup> Swift Polonization ensued, with a mere four years of grace (until 1926) for the use of German, alongside Polish, in administration. In the educational system Polish replaced German, with some international provisions for minority German-medium schools. (Kamusella 2007; Serafin 1996: 15-29, 178-196, 78-100)

### **Conclusion: Germanization and Russification, but also Polonization**

Language was of political significance in Poland-Lithuania, but in no way the basis of its politics; it was one basis among others, at most. Its importance was limited to the narrow stratum of the estates, meaning the monarch and the nobility, the clergy and the richest burghers. The last group, however, was more often than not negligible in Poland-Lithuania, due to the paucity of bigger cities in the commonwealth. During the pre-modern period, language choices of political importance were dictated by a religion selected as the legitimizing basis for a polity. In the European context it had to be a

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<sup>27</sup> In the case of the 1920 division of Austrian Silesia between Czechoslovakia and Poland, it was the former polity that obtained the entirety of Austria-Hungary's largest coal and metallurgical basin located in the crownland.

written language in which the religion's holy book was composed, or into which an authoritative translation of a holy book was rendered. The Koran and the Torah (composed in Arabic and Hebrew, respectively) fall into the former category, while the Latin Vulgate, and the Church Slavonic and Armenian Bibles (that is, translated into Latin, Slavonic and Grabar) fall into the latter. By early modern times none of these languages was still employed in everyday communication by a speech community, with the qualified exception of the Classical Arabic<sup>28</sup> of the Koran. The ideological difference between these languages was emphasized by the use of starkly different scripts to write them, Arabic, Hebrew, Armenian, Latin and Cyrillic, respectively.

The choice of one religion or another for a polity dictated that its official language and its script had to be that of the religion. The actual vernacular(s) of the realm's population at large did not matter in the least. This was with the partial exceptions of Grabar and Church Slavonic into which the Bible was translated to make it intelligible for the respective speech communities in the 5th century in the former case and in the 9th century in the latter. But even in these two cases, by the modern period both languages had become so antiquated as to be unintelligible to Armenian- and Slavic-speakers who were not trained as clergymen.

In pre-modern times, not even rulers needed to know the sacred language of their chosen holy book. They had their own specialists, usually local or foreign clergy, who did all the necessary writing for inter-state contacts and rudimentary administration. The spread of literacy among the male half of the members of the estates, as necessitated by modernization and encouraged by the Reformation, ushered into being new written languages stemming from the leading vernacular of the estates in a given polity. (Most often, the 'leading vernacular' was the sociolect of the ruler and the estates.) However genetically different these languages might be from the holy language, the newcomers shared the holy language's script. Thus German and Polish were written in the Latin alphabet, Yiddish in Hebrew characters, Osmanica (Ottoman Turkic) in the Arabic script, Modern Armenian and Kipchak as employed by Armenians in Armenian letters, while Ruthenian and Russian were written in Cyrillic.

The change from sacred languages to vernacular-based ones for administrative and written purposes was gradual. It accelerated in the

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<sup>28</sup> The Arabic of the Koran survives as the written standard of this language to this day, though it is substantially removed from everyday spoken Arabic.

early modern period and was at its fastest in Protestant polities, where religion and state ideology staked their legitimization on the recognition and widespread use of vernaculars. Initially, the Counter-Reformation prevented Catholic realms from following this path. On the other hand, the rise of French as a noble sociolect across Western and Central Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries halted local vernaculars in their tracks. The decisive change in favor of vernacular-based written languages came in Central Europe with reforms imposed from above in the Russian Empire and the Habsburg lands in the 18th century. In the former case it meant the spread of the model of the use of vernaculars for written purposes among Orthodox Slavs (that is, in Russia, and later in the Balkans) and Romanceophone Walachians (later Romanians and Moldovans), while in the latter it marked the beginning of the decline of Latin as the language of administration, politics and scholarly discourse in the Catholic areas of Central Europe.

Arguably, it was the Napoleonic Wars that ushered modernity, as we understand it, into Central Europe. The ideological platform to this end was nationalism. The ideal began to coalesce that postulated the equation of language, population and state. One of the main reactions to the Napoleonic onslaught on Europe and the subsequent defeat of the French armies was the limiting of the use of French in favor of local vernaculars.

This was the time when Poland-Lithuania disappeared, and its lands were divided among the Habsburgs, Prussia and the Russian Empire. In the Commonwealth, during the last third of the 18th century, Polish gradually took over from Latin as the leading language of administration and politics. But no straightforward legislation was ever promulgated to secure the official position for Polish in Poland-Lithuania.

At the turn of the 19th century, the aforementioned switch from French and holy languages to vernaculars had been most pronounced in the Austrian Empire and Prussia. As a result, the use of Polish was curbed in the Austrian and Prussian partition zones of Poland-Lithuania, but especially so in the former zone. The exigencies of the Napoleonic expansion and the subsequent defeat of imperial France, ushered into being the polities of the Congress Kingdom of Poland (earlier, the Duchy of Warsaw) and the Free City of Cracow in Poland-Lithuania's territorial core that had disappeared only in the last, third, partition. Both states, from an ethnolinguistic point of view, were predominantly Polish. And, for the first time in history, the status of Polish as the sole (or leading) official language and medium of

education was enshrined in the two polities' legislation. It was the legal and ideological basis on which Polish ethnic (or more correctly, ethnolinguistic) nationalists built in the latter half of the 19th century, emulating German ethnolinguistic nationalism.

By the mid-19th century language had become the leading political issue in the lands of the partitioned Poland-Lithuania. The expansion of the use of German in administration and education in the Prussian partition zone, at the expense of Polish, was now interpreted as malevolent Germanization. No accusation of this kind was heard half a century later when Poland-Lithuania was partitioned out of existence, and its nobility had no difficulty accepting the domination of German in official life in the enlarged Prussia, or the domination of this language alongside the continuing salience of Latin in the Habsburgs' share of Poland-Lithuania. By the middle of the 19th century, young Polish-Lithuanian nobles and the emerging group of ethnolinguistically Polish intelligentsia had come to despise the linguistic situation in the Austrian zone of partition, especially after the incorporation of the Free City of Cracow into it that entailed the Germanization of this polity's administration and educational system.

In a surprising contrast to what the Polish national master narrative proposes (or glides over), there was no policy of Russification worth its name in the Russian partition zone and Russia's Congress Kingdom of Poland prior to the mid-1860s. In the Russian partition zone Polish was maintained as the leading language of administration and politics. As a medium of education it had to share this role with Latin until the 1800s. The modernizing and educational reforms commenced in the partition zone in 1801 supplanted Latin with Polish in education. The use of Polish, as the language of administration and education was actually extended to the Kiev (Kyiv) area that Poland-Lithuania had lost to Muscovy in the 17th century.

The ethnolinguistic composition of the Russian zone's population did not justify this maintenance and even spread of the official and educational use of Polish there, because no more than ten per cent of the inhabitants could be plausibly defined as Poles. But the Polish-speaking ten per cent closely coincided with the Polish-Lithuanian nobility and clergy, or the social elite in Russia's partition zone. St Petersburg recognized the intellectual and economic potential of this stratum for the modernization of this region and the entire Russian Empire. This was the goal then, not the creation of an ethnolinguistically homogenous Russian nation-state. For the same reason, the Polish-language administration, politics, army and

education system were retained in the ethnolinguistically Polish Congress Kingdom of Poland gained by Russia at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Not surprisingly then, the fact that in the 1820s more Russian subjects were educated and literate in Polish than Russian did not unduly bother the tsar. Nationalism and its specifically Central European fixation on language were a song of the future.

Looking at the language policy in the Congress Kingdom and the Russian partition zone through the spectacles of ethnolinguistic nationalism, it is only appropriate to describe it as Polonization in the latter region and a strangely benevolent non-insistence on Russification in the Congress Kingdom. St Petersburg's approach changed when Polish-Lithuanian nobles and their progeny, increasingly turned into a Polish intelligentsia (more open to other Polish-speaking social groups), began to embrace the Polish language as an instrument of anti-Russian politics. The tsar had no choice but to acknowledge the rise of Polish ethnolinguistic nationalism, and to take steps against it, when the ideology endangered the Russian imperial project. He had to tread carefully though, because a full anti-Polish reaction could have deprived the empire of the crucial social and economic capital embodied by the Polish-Lithuanian nobility and the Polish intelligentsia.

Therefore, St Petersburg's reaction to the anti-Russian uprising of 1830-1831 varied. In the ethnolinguistically non-Polish Russian partition zone, Polonization was rolled back. A Polish ethnolinguistic nationalist would say that it was replaced with reprehensible Russification, but from the religious-cum-ideological viewpoint, the zone's peasant masses were closer to their counterparts in Russia proper than to their Polish-Lithuanian lords. Hence, from the Russian point of view, in the scope of which all the historically Rus' lands were to 'be gathered' into Russia as the rightful successor to Rus', it was a re-introduction of the 'normal state of matters.' The Russian partition zone, as a historical part of Rus', was seen to be an integral part of Russia. Yet another opinion could be voiced by a Belarusian or Ukrainian nationalist that it was reprehensible Polonization that supplanted equally reprehensible Russification. But by no stretch of imagination was there any Ukrainian national movement worthy of the name prior to the 1860s, or of a Belarusian counterpart before the turn of the 20th century.

Focusing on the language policy in the Congress Kingdom of Poland, the reaffirmation of ethnolinguistic Polishness, a Polonization of a kind, (at the expense of the non-introduction of Russian language and culture) lasted until the 1830-1831 uprising. Later, it was replaced

with the, however grudging and distrustful, acceptance of Polishness there, with the clear message that there was no place for it anywhere else in the Empire outside the Kingdom's frontiers. Certainly there was no place for it in the Russian partition zone. After the 1863-1864 anti-Russian uprising, the tsar did not need to be merciful to the Polish-Lithuanian nobles and the Polish intelligentsia any longer, because they had ceased to constitute a plurality (let alone the majority) of the social and economic capital in the Empire by the mid-19th century. They had become replaceable. Full-scale Russification followed in the Congress Kingdom. Administrative and school posts for Polish-speakers dried up, unless they were fully literate in Russian and were not tainted by too close an association with the rebellious circles of Polish-Lithuanian nobles and Polish intelligentsia.

Fortunately for educated Polish-speakers, after the transformation of the absolutist Austrian Empire into a liberal Austria-Hungary in 1867, the policy of Germanization was replaced with one of thorough Polonization in Galicia. In a more nuanced way, it was a policy of the reaffirmation of Polishness that prevailed in the western half of this crownland, and of Polonization with gradually more extensive ethnolinguistic rights for Ruthenians (Ukrainians) in the non-Polish eastern half of Galicia.

Galicia turned into a quasi, or ersatz, Polish nation-state, where the Polish language and culture rapidly developed and changed in order to become attuned to the requirements of modernity. A parallel process of the same kind unfolded in the case of the Ruthenian (Ukrainian) language and culture. Hence, beginning in the 1890's, grass roots Ukrainization became permanently intertwined with elite Polonization in eastern Galicia. Polonization in Galicia also led to the assimilation of many German-speakers and fewer Orthodox Yiddish-speaking Jews. Many of the latter, perceiving Austria-Hungary as their proper homeland, settled for German language and culture, too.

It seems appropriate to propose that without Polish Galicia there might have been no Poland or that it would have been quite a different country. Likewise, without the Russian policy of using Polish for administration and education in a large area of European Russia until the 1830s, and without St Petersburg's preservation of the Polish character of the Congress Kingdom until the 1860s, the share of Poles (Polish-speakers) would have been considerably smaller among the populations that nowadays inhabit the lands of the former Poland-Lithuanian.

The Russian policies of Polonization and the acceptance of Polishness laid the foundation of modern Polish culture as embodied in the Polish-language publishing industry, press and schools. The maintenance and broadening of the initially narrow group of persons literate in the Polish language was crucial for imagining a Polish nation into existence. The experience of Polish Galicia built on this foundation. Despite the volatility in the pursuit of the policies of Germanization, Polonization and Russification, the existence of the Polish-language book market and press facilitated weathering the exigencies and inconsistencies of day-to-day politics, as they unfolded in the partition zones in various periods. A Polish-speaking person in search of Polish-language education, employment and reading matters could always turn to another partition zone, if what was required was not available in his or her home partition zone.

Focusing on the Germanization policy in Prussia's section of Poland-Lithuania, one immediately notices that it was more lenient than its counterpart in Vienna's partition zone until 1867. In reality, the dominance of Polish in elementary education and local administration, coupled with German-Polish bilingualism in secondary education and provincial government, continued until 1807. Due to the considerable intake of Polish-Lithuanian territories in the course of the partitions, Prussia became a German-Polish polity, which made straightforward Germanization a sheer impossibility. Napoleon cut back at Prussia's section of Poland-Lithuania, thus, among others, restoring a clearly German character to Prussia. Prussia was left with the Grand Duchy of Posen and the Province of West Prussia, where Polish was widespread. In the wake of the Congress of Vienna the use of this language was curbed, bilingualism was promoted, and where already established, it was gradually replaced with German monolingualism.

A change occurred in the revolutionary year of 1848, due to the anti-Prussian uprising of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility in the Grand Duchy of Posen. The gains of Germanization achieved after 1815 were rolled back. This grand duchy and West Prussia were partly re-Polonized. In the wake of the defeat of the 1848 revolutions, the policy of gradual Germanization was reintroduced, as it had been after 1815.

It was the founding of the German Empire as a German nation-state that constituted a clear-cut breach with this policy of gradualism, a virtual dance of Germanization with Polonization, two steps forward and one backward, two to the left, and one to the right. In the first half of the 1870s, the autonomous status of the Grand Duchy of Posen was revoked, and Polish (alongside other minority languages across

the empire) was supplanted by German in administration and education. Polish (and other minority languages) survived as a subject in elementary schools until the 1880s and in middle and secondary schools until the 1890s.

The ethnolinguistic policies of Germanization and Russification, as they unfolded in the latter half of the 19th century, were dictated, respectively, by German nationalism in the German Empire and by the acknowledgement of the force of this nationalism in the Russian Empire. It was these very policies and their stern introduction in the late 19th century that conditioned the current popular Polish perception of the 'partitions period' (*okres rozbiorów*, 1772/1795-1918) as the time of relentless Germanization and Russification. This perception, enshrined in the Polish national master narrative (and one of its very cornerstones) has been invariably imparted to successive generations of Polish schoolchildren since 1918. The master narrative being a product and a legitimization of Polish ethnolinguistic nationalism, it avoids mentioning numerous instances of Polonization in the partitions period. Likewise, it does not dwell on nuances in the interplay of and on the waxing and waning of the policies of Germanization, Polonization and Russification through time and space in the territory of the former Poland-Lithuania. Apparently, to be effective the message of nationalism must be painted in simplistic, black and white, colors.

The period of the political dominance of ethnolinguistic nationalisms in the lands of the former Poland-Lithuania that began in earnest at the turn of the 20th century, entailed more complications. Following the 1905 Revolution, Russification subsided across European Russia. Polish (and German in Courland) was allowed to be re-introduced as a subject in schools in the Congress Kingdom and in the partition zone. Likewise, the bans on the production and importation of publications in Belarusian, Latvian, Lithuanian (and Samogitian), and Little Russian (Ukrainian) were lifted. The rise of Ukrainian nationalism in Russia was facilitated by the rapid development of the Ukrainian language and culture across the border in Austria-Hungary's eastern Galicia. At the same time, following the tenets of the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment), Hebrew-based Zionism, and Yiddish-based Jewish nationalism and socialism gained strength, alongside the trend of assimilation that encouraged Jews to adopt German, Polish or Russian as their languages of everyday communication.

The emergence of mass politics in the lands of the former Poland-Lithuania added new ethnolinguistic national movements to the



political mosaic. Thus, besides Germanization, Polonization and Russification, the turn of the 20th century saw the beginnings of Belorussianization, Hebrewization, Latvianization, Lithuanization, Ukrainization and Yiddishization. During World War One the German and Austro-Hungarian occupation administrations fortified this trend when they banished Russian from Russia's share of Poland-Lithuania seized by Berlin and Vienna. They did not replace this language with German but settled on Polish in the Regency Kingdom of Poland, on Ruthenian (Ukrainian) in Volhynia, and on Belarusian, German, Latvian, Lithuanian and Yiddish in the Land Ober Ost. These policies and the respective national movements dependent on these languages contributed, in 1917 and 1918, to the establishment of Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine as ethnolinguistic nation-states.

The multifarious legacy of the various nationalisms and languages as they unfolded then is evident to this day on the lands of the former Poland-Lithuania, in the form of a variety of ethnolinguistic nations and their respective national polities with a tentative offshoot in the Middle East, that is, Israel. The Polish reader needs to remember it to understand why Poland-Lithuania was not Poland, and why the defunct commonwealth's territory and inhabitants were not transformed into a modern-day Poland and its Polish nation. Bearing in mind the same nuances will help the curious international reader to comprehend the counterintuitive developments that, rather than simply transforming Poland-Lithuania into Poland and Lithuania, yielded the nation-states of Belarus, Israel (to a degree), Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine.

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